

**SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE
VAYIKRA/HAHODESH**

Haftarah: Yehezkel 45:18-46:15

MARCH 20-21, 2015 1 NISAN 5775

Rosh Hodesh Nisan will be celebrated on Shabbat, March 21.
In memory of Jack David Gindi – Yaakob Ben Victoria

Candle lighting Friday evening March 13 at 6:48 p.m. Mincha at 6:45, Shir HaShirim 6:30

**SHABBAT: Morning Class with Rav Aharon at 8:15
Hashem Melech 8:45 and Baruch SheAmar at 9:00 AM –
Shema this week 9:20**

We take out three Torah Scrolls this Shabbat

Kiddush Sponsored by Patti and Jack Azizo in honor of the Synagogue

Please sponsor a Kiddush or Seudah Shelishi or breakfast in memory or in honor of a loved one.
Our weekly Kiddush will be subject to sponsorship. We would love to see the sponsorship board filled.
Dairy Kiddush sponsorship will be \$300, \$400 for Deluxe and \$ 500 for Super Deluxe
Meat Kiddush sponsorship will be \$400, \$600 for Deluxe and \$1000 for Super Deluxe

Although the cost of Seuda Shelishi has been covered, we will still take sponsors at \$100 for the class each week. And Sunday and weekday breakfasts are \$100 ea
If we get no sponsor then we will do our best to prepare a minimal Kiddush based on the Yusupov/Pinto/ Bibi Bakery sponsorship only.

**Shabbat Morning Children's Program 10:30 - 11:30 with Jennifer
Ages 2-5 - in the Playroom/**

Girls Ages 6-12 - In the Upstairs Library / Treats, Games, Stories, Prayers and Fun!

**Children's afternoon program with the Bach at Sephardic March, April and May at 4:30 PM
Ladies Class at the Lembergers at 5:30**

**Pirkey Avot with Rav Aharon at 5:40
Mincha at 6:10**

**Seudah Shelishi with Rabbi David at 6:40 – the little Alef
Sponsored In memory of Jack David Gindi – Yaakob Ben Victoria
Arbit at 7:40 Followed by Havdala - Shabbat Ends at 7:48**

**Sunday morning class with Rabbi Yaakov Siegel at 9AM
Krav Maga at 10AM**

We would like to do Sunday Mincha and Arbit at 6:30PM

COMMUNAL SEDER

Answering to popular request, we will again have Seders in the Synagogue. We are already getting a great deal of interest with especially for the first night so please book right away so we have the right food purchased. \$50 a night per person (\$25 Children 10 and under) to cover most of the expenses with donations needed to break even. If the cost is a problem, please speak to Ida as we dont want to leave people out (provided we have the sponsorships). We will look for sponsors to supplement those who cannot pay and to assist. So please be generous as in lieu of inviting guests, you can pay for someone else. And don't forget, you can also invite guests who may not otherwise have the opportunity to attend.

We would like everyone attending to either volunteer or donate if possible. will need volunteers to: Handle reservations and payments, Purchase Food, and utensils, Set up and decoration. Handle the food and assist with serving. Let us know if you would , A: like to attend, B: Can donate , C: Can volunteer

Chag Kasher VeSameyach

**DELEGATION OF POWER OF ATTORNEY
FOR THE SALE OF HAMETZ**

I, the undersigned, fully power and permit **Rabbi Isaac Mann** to act in my place and stead, and in my behalf to sell all hametz possessed by me (knowingly and unknowingly) as defined by the Torah and rabbinical law (e.g., hametz, doubtful hametz, and all kinds of hametz mixtures). The said Rabbi is empowered to lease all places wherein the hametz owned by me may be found, especially in the premises located at:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Approximate total value of the hametz _____

Rabbi Isaac Mann has the full right to sell and to lease by transaction, as he deems fit and proper and for such time he believes necessary in accordance with all the rules and regulations of Jewish law.

I hereby give the said **Rabbi Isaac Mann** full power and authority to appoint a substitute in his stead with full power to sell and to lease as provided herein. The above given power is in conformity with all Torah and rabbinical laws and regulations, and also in accordance with the laws of the State of New York and of the United States. And to this I hereby affix my signature on this _____ day of March 2015.

Signature _____

Name (Printed) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

***Mail to Rabbi Isaac Mann, 900A Cornaga Ave., Far Rockaway, NY 11691.
It is preferable to arrange the authorization in person. To do so call the Rabbi at
(516)582-7691.***

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**Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue,
 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 4PM – Please join us!
 212-289-2100 – Mincha– The most important
 tefilah of the day –Give us 11 minutes and we'll
 give you the World To Come!**

Editors Notes From the Archives 2013

Gutman (Gil) Locks, who we have written about before has a very interesting job. He volunteers each day at the Tefilin stand by the Kotel in Jerusalem helping people who have not put on Tefilin, many for years, put on a pair and say a quick prayer. A few times each week, he sends out an image of someone he helped and tells their story. This week among others including an image of locusts at the wall awaiting Passover, he posted an image of an older tourist visiting the old city with his camera and wearing Tefilin at the Kotel.

Gil notes that the man told him, "My Grandfather gave me tefillin for my bar mitzvah, but I never put them on. I still have them in a drawer where I keep old things that I have." He just retired. He worked his entire life for the same company. He married a non-Jewish girl and has only non-Jewish children. He had never put on tefillin before I brought him in, not even the tefillin that his grandfather gave him on his bar mitzvah. He cried when he stood at the Kotel with the tefillin on.

How different his life would have been had his grandfather done more than just give him the tefillin?

"Rav Asi asked, 'Why do little school children begin their Chumash learning with Vayikra (Leviticus which we begin this week) and not with Bereshit (Genesis)? It is because little children are pure and unblemished, and the sacrifices are pure and unblemished. The pure ones begin their learning with the study of the pure.' Midrash Vayikra Rabbah (Parshas Tzav 7:3).

The Rebbe suggested that alternatively, Chumash Vayikra primarily discusses the different karbanot that the Jewish people were required to offer to Hashem. Teaching it to young children imparts a message to both parents and children.

Jewish parents are being told that they must make sacrifices so that their children may succeed in Torah study. They must forego lavish lifestyles to live in a way compatible with the Torah teachings their children are receiving, and they should be prepared to give up luxuries in order to pay tuition fees.

Jewish children must also know from the very beginning that sacrifice and dedication are a prerequisite for success in Torah studies. One cannot just sit back and expect to learn without effort. A Torah student must always bear in mind the words of our Sages (Megillah 6b): "If a person says, 'I have tried hard and succeeded,' believe him." Only through diligent and assiduous study will one succeed.

Moreover, the youth is being told that throughout life as a Torah observant Jew he may encounter hardship and even persecution. Nevertheless, he should be ready to make sacrifices for Yiddishkeit, and ultimately he will realize that his life will be meaningful and rewarding.

Last night I picked up my son Moses after Mishmar and we went for a bite to eat afterwards. His school had career day where different parents, grandparents and friends came in to talk to the high school students about their careers. Moses told me that he realized from listening to these different people that he had been ignorant with the thought of what it cost to live. And we talked about average salaries and typical expenses. When he realized that sending one's children to Yeshiva could easily add \$100,000 a year to a family budget, he commented on the incredible sacrifice that a Jewish parent must make to cover that cost.

Years back my son Jonah wrote a report which dealt with intermarriage noting that the single greatest obstacle to that path is a Yeshiva education. If we sacrifice for Torah than the Torah protects us.

I was reminded of a story that Rabbi Abittan z'sl would tell from Moreshet Avot.

In the time of Rav Chaim, who founded the famous Volozhin Yeshiva, there was talk among the Jews of Lithuania of three Volozhin Yeshiva students who were all known for their outstanding qualities. One came from a very distinguished family which had produced seven generations of rabbanim; the second had superb manners and displayed beautiful middot - (ethical character traits); and the third had a sharp mind and had been very studious in his Torah learning.

These three students became caught up in the wave of the Berlin haskalah movement (so called "enlightenment," "education" from sekhel "intellect", "mind") which swept the Jewish world. They all left the yeshivah and pursued secular culture. Rav Chaim, their rav, was greatly pained over their actions, cried bitter tears and refused to be consoled.

Rav Chaim's rebbi, the Gr'a, appeared to him in a dream and told him: "So-and-so will the sword of the haskalah devour. The merit of their forefathers will not protect those who have become trapped in heresy, for all of Benei Yisrael have special yichus - lineage, distinguished birth, pedigree, since they are the sons of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. Neither will good middot stand in the way of punishment, for good middot are not unique to Jews. Yet whoever learned Torah for its own sake once, whoever has tasted the sweetness of Torah, whoever has absorbed the smell of Torah I am certain that the Torah will stand up to protect him and save his soul from the lower pits. The Torah doesn't allow a Jew who has learned it to deny G-d and join another nation."

Many years later, when Rav Chaim inquired as to what had become of his former students, he found out that the first student, the one who had such impressive yichus, had forgotten his lineage and the glory of his family and intermarried; the second student, who was exceptional in his conduct, gave himself over to the wisdom of philosophy and became confused, to the point that he totally abandoned his faith and would expound on nonsensical matters. The third student, the masmid, had done very well in his university studies and his name had been praised far and wide by secular scholars, who sought him out and respected and flattered him. Eventually he was offered a professorship at the royal university. Since such a high position was not ordinarily given to a Jew, he was asked to renounce his faith. He managed to avoid doing this each time he was asked. Finally, the pressure grew stronger, and he requested three days in which to make a decision.

In those three days he relinquished all his honor and fled to Eretz Yisrael. On his way he made a detour to Volozhin to visit his former Rebbe and ask for his blessing.

Rav Chaim was overjoyed to see him and hugged him affectionately. After the student recounted what had happened to him, Rav Chaim asked him, "My son, who saved you from sin?"

"I happened to have passed my old neighborhood late one night," the student answered. "As I walked past a Jewish home, I heard the sound of Torah learning accompanied by a sad melody. I stopped where I was and listened. I imagined that the sounds of sorrow which echoed in my ears were those of the Torah itself, crying over the fact that I had abandoned it and was on the threshold of becoming a traitor. At

that moment thoughts of teshuvah arose within me, and that is what saved me."

Rabbi Yisrael Pesach Feinhandler comments that the student who withstood the trial was the one who had toiled in Torah from an early age. We must learn from this to give our children strong, clear guidance when they are young, so that they will have the strength to withstand the trials that they will inevitably face in their lives.

As we approach Passover when families will be getting together, whether at home or in their travels, let us take the opportunity to really fulfill, VeHigatedta "And you shall tell your child on that day". Let's not just hand them something to hide away in the back of a drawer. Let's instead give them a gift which they will use every day of their life.

A Moving Minyan on the Commute to Tel Aviv Seeking a morning prayer service? Head to the rear car of the train.

By Aaron R. Katz| The Scroll

Working in Israel offers numerous perks to an observant Jew. Moving from a downtown Chicago office to working in the heart of Tel Aviv in the Azrieli Center has provided me with no dearth of options for kosher food and places to pray the afternoon Mincha service. While I certainly miss Sundays off, it's quite a relief not having to figure out how to make it home in time for a 3:59 p.m. Shabbat candle-lighting time during a Chicago snowstorm.

But in my short time living in Israel since I made aliyah in October 2014 with my wife and two daughters, my favorite adjustment has actually been the commute to the workplace, where I have the opportunity to pray the Shacharit service each morning on the train from Beit Shemesh to Tel Aviv with a moving minyan.

During the morning the train is filled with people from all walks of life, but the back car of the train is unofficially designated the "minyan car." It quickly fills up with those who wish to pray their morning services on their commute to work. Men busy themselves putting on their tefillin and wrapping themselves with their tallit. Once the train doors close, the riders in the minyan car set their hearts towards the east as the train heads to the west.

While it's an Orthodox minyan intended for men, it's not an official train-sponsored minyan, which means anyone can sit in the car and nobody is forced to move for the informal gathering. I've only seen respectful interactions between minyan-goers and those seated nearby.

Minyan car on the author's commute to Tel Aviv.

What makes this train minyan particularly unique (not that there are many others like it) is that there is a tiny Torah scroll provided by one of the minyan members for the service every Monday and Thursday, as well as on other days when the Torah is read, including Rosh Chodesh and Hanukkah. Many people, myself included, tailor their commute schedule to make sure their Monday and Thursday ride is on a train that has a Torah—either the 7 a.m. or 8 a.m.

Once in the crowded minyan car, I push my way to the back of the train to join the Kohanim, members of the priestly tribe, who gather together to chant the Birkat Kohanim, the priestly benediction, at the designated time towards the end of the Shemoneh Esrei prayer. Before moving to Israel, I had never said the Birkat Kohanim on a daily basis, but now, instead of reciting it by rote, I feel especially connected to the words of the prayer.

After an introductory blessing, the Kohanim repeat the following prayer in Hebrew after the Chazzan: May God bless you and guard you, May God make His face shed light upon you and be gracious unto you, May God lift up His face unto you and give you peace.

I have always found the text of the Birkat Kohanim remarkably uplifting. But as I recite the prayer each morning—on a moving train in the State of Israel—the words have taken on an entirely new meaning for me, and even more so when I am chanting it during the difficult security situation that Israel is currently facing. On a train filled with the spectrum of Israeli society, I have a unique opportunity to provide the passengers, including the soldiers and police officers who risk their lives to defend the State of Israel, with a blessing of protection and peace.

The Talmud explains in tractate Sotah 38b that Birkat Kohanim reaches out to the people “out in the fields” who are unable to be present during the recitation of the blessing. As we literally pass through the fields in the vicinity of Ramla and Lod each morning during Birkat Kohanim, I always smile at how literal the Talmudic saying has become in my own life. And I wonder, could the rabbis of the Talmud ever have imagined that an immigrant Kohen to Israel would be passing through the fields with a minyan while reciting the Birkat Kohanim and praying for peace?

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st & 2nd & 3rd Aliyot: The instructions for offering a "Oleh" - burnt offering (fully consumed on the Alter) is detailed. This offering could be brought from a bull, or male sheep or goat. The less expensive "Oleh", using a Turtle Dove or common dove, is described. The

Mincha, an offering made from baked, fried, or deep fried matzoh type crackers is detailed.

4th Aliya: The Korban Shlomim - the peace offering, brought from male or female cattle, sheep, and goats is described.

5th Aliya: This aliya describes this Korban Chatas - the sin offering. Three unique sin offerings are described:

1. When the High Priest sinned
2. If the King sinned
3. If the entire nation sinned because of a wrong ruling by the Sanhedrin - High Court. Note: A Korban Chatas could only be offered if the sin was unintentional.

6th & 7th Aliyot: The Korban Chatas of a commoner is detailed, as well as the specifics of the Korban Asham - the guilt offering. This Korban was offered in instances where intentional wrong doing was implicated; such as not fulfilling an assumed oath, or doing something questionable without first ascertaining the law. Additionally, a type of Asham was offered in instances of dishonesty and swearing falsely.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

“This month shall be for you the beginning of the months.” (Shemot 12:2)

This Shabbat is Rosh Hodesh Nisan and we read the special reading of Parashat Hahodesh. Our Sages teach (see Rashi) that when Hashem first told Moshe Rabenu about the misvah of sanctifying the month, which is to pronounce the moment of each new month's appearance, Moshe had difficulty understanding how it is done. Finally Hashem pointed to the image of the new moon and said, “When you see this, pronounce the day holy as Rosh Hodesh. What was it that Moshe found so difficult?

Rabbi Moshe Mizrahi quotes the Maor Vashemesh that answers this question based on another of the Sages' teachings (Hulin 60b). When first created, the sun and moon were of equal size and brightness. After the moon suggested that it would be better if one was greater than the other, Hashem instructed to moon to diminish itself.

Hashem did not simply make the moon smaller; He told the moon to make itself smaller and it submitted humbly to Hashem's will. Each month it repeats this noble act, diminishing its visible surface until it disappears from view. The moon thus became a symbol of absolute humility.

Hashem told Moshe, “Hahodesh hazeh lachem – this moon is meant to be an example for you.” To become the redeemer of My people, you and Aharon must embody the same humility as the moon. Moshe, however, was afraid that he had not met this requirement. His humility was so absolute that he questioned whether he was indeed humble.

This was Moshe’s difficulty with the misvah of sanctifying the month. But Hashem countered that his hesitation was proof that he attained the greatest level of humility. “When you will see this, pronounce it holy.” Your total effacement is what qualifies you as the redeemer.

Our imminent redemption, Be’ezrat Hashem, will be led by someone equally humble. As stated in Penei David, this is alluded to in the words “Hahodesh hazeh lachem,” which has the same numerical value (424) as “Mashiah ben David.” Maybe we will witness it this very month – “In Nisan they will be redeemed.” Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

"He called to Moshe." (Vayikra 1:1)

The first word of this week's perashah, Vayikra, is written with a small alef (t) at the end. The Rabbis tell us that this was a compromise between Hashem and Moshe. When Hashem called out to Moshe, which signifies a very special honor, Moshe, who was extremely humble, didn't want to write it that way. He asked Hashem whether he could skip the alef and write rehu, which means "He chanced" upon Moshe. Hashem said, "No, but you may write it with a small letter."

With this, we can understand a very amazing Midrash. We know that Moshe had rays of light shining from his face. The Midrash says that this came about when Moshe took the leftover ink from his quill and put it on his face. It gave him a special light. What ink was leftover, and how could ink produce light? In a homiletic approach we can understand it based on the previous thought. Moshe was a self-effacing, extremely humble person. He wanted to make sure that no attention is called to his greatness. Therefore, he wanted to write rehu, and finally wrote trehu with a small alef. When a person makes himself smaller, he eventually becomes greater, because people who are humble are those we appreciate and acknowledge. This was the light on Moshe's face. Those that toot their own horns, however, are usually known as precisely that: people who make a lot of noise.

We know many people who suffer from "I" trouble, always punctuating their sentences with "I" this and "I" that. We also know those who are quiet, self-effacing, looking to stay out of the limelight. We know whom we'd rather be with. That's also who we

should try to be. Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

BELIEVE IT

Science has developed instruments to measure all types of things. Some items are so large that we would be unable to measure them were it not for specialized equipment, and other things are so microscopic that without particular tools to magnify them, they would not be visible to the human eye. People would not even know that they exist! But despite all these scientific advances, no tool has yet been created that can measure a person's belief.

Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, zt"l, said that if people truly believed that Hashem was providing all they needed, then they could have whatever they wished without having to work for it.

A man who worked in plaster and paint heard this speech and asked the Rabbi to confirm the truth of his statement, and the Rabbi told him it was a fact. The worker left his job and stayed home, reading and praying all day long.

The man's financial situation steadily declined day by day. When the situation became unbearable, the man and his wife approached the Rabbi. "Why did your promise to my husband not come true?" the woman demanded. The Rabbi listened patiently to her tirade, and then answered, "It will come true if you are patient. I understand you want \$10,000. Perhaps, if you can't wait, you will sell me this pending sum of \$10,000 for \$5,000 today." The man jumped at the opportunity for a quick \$5,000.

The Rabbi turned to the man's wife. If your husband truly believed what I said, then he would not sell \$10,000 for \$5,000 under any circumstances. It is obvious that his belief is less than one-hundred percent." Then Rabbi Salanter faced the man, and, with an understanding smile, he said, "I think you should return to work as soon as possible."

Matters of faith require constant reinforcement. People never know when something may happen to damage their beliefs. The Torah commands us to believe in Hashem – that He is our Creator, and that He is in control of all that happens all of the time. Individuals should work on these concepts on a regular basis to strengthen them within their belief system. (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

Rabbi Wein DISCONNECTION

One of the problems that faces religious leadership in the Jewish world, especially the leadership of the

great scholars and heads of the leading educational institutions here in Israel, is that there is a chasm of disconnect between them and the masses that they wish to lead and influence.

I remember that once when I was a rabbi in Miami Beach many decades ago, a noted Israeli Talmudic scholar asked permission to speak on Shabbat in my synagogue. I immediately arranged for him to do so but I spoke to him in advance and said that the makeup of the synagogue would not allow for an intricate Talmudic lecture that would not be understood or appreciated.

Ignoring my advice, a situation that I am well accustomed to, the scholar proceeded to deliver a thirty five minute discourse on a very esoteric and little known subject mentioned in the Talmud. Naturally, his words were ill received and I suffered the indignities of being reprimanded by many in the synagogue for allowing that scholar to speak.

I asked the scholar why he ignored my advice and chose to speak about a subject that had no relevance or interest to the assembled audience. He facetiously or perhaps seriously answered: "I was trying to raise them to a higher level of total Torah knowledge." I said to him that I thought his goals were admirable but that his methods were deplorable.

I explained to him that in my opinion a speaker and certainly a religious scholar, who views one's self as a person of leadership and influence in the Jewish world, cannot afford to have a complete disconnect with the people to whom he is speaking and trying to lead.

The Torah teaches us that our teacher Moshe "descended to the people." That is not only a physical description of Moshe coming down from Mount Sinai but its broader implication is that Moshe had to have had connection and empathy with the people of Israel. He could not lead them from the heights of Sinai but rather he could do so only if he were willing to descend from the mount, so to speak, to the level of the people

Much of the struggle, both within and without the religious Jewish world here in Israel, is over this issue of disconnection. For various reasons, some of which are true but most of which are exaggerated or based on ignorance, the Israeli public has little confidence, respect or adherence to its rabbinic leadership. This is not only true regarding the sorry state of the official Chief Rabbinate but even in those sectors of religious society which claim to follow the wishes of the great

scholars of Israel. The influence of these scholars at ground level is minor.

This again is because of the enormous disconnect between the world and environment that the scholars live in and the true environment of daily life and its challenges and problems that confront the masses. Raising the level of knowledge and spirituality amongst people is a lengthy and arduous process. It can only be done if the leadership truly understands and appreciates the situations and difficulties that the mass public faces.

The Talmud itself stated that religious leaders should not establish decrees that most of the public will find impossible to abide by. Yet we are witness on a regular basis to the utterances and decrees of the great scholars which if followed would make it impossible for most Jews in Israel to live and survive.

This disconnect is apparent to all – it is the elephant in the room that is ignored by both the leadership and the masses. We are forced to live in some sort of fantasy land of theoretical obedience to the scholars and the practicality of ignoring their pronouncements. Disconnect eventually breeds disrespect.

There are currently a number of initiatives to try and bridge this disconnect and rebuild the authority of the rabbinate and the scholars here in Israel. All of these initiatives are being fought against tooth and nail by the established powers and political interests that are so embedded in Israeli public and religious life.

There is a false sense of accomplishment and by those who continue to protect this disconnect and to believe that what was once can be imposed on what now is. The struggle to create a rabbinate that understands and speaks to the people, and one that could gain the respect of the public and restore itself to spiritual and moral leadership in the country, has been an ongoing one for the past century.

It does not appear that this struggle will be won by either side in the very near future. Nevertheless, the problem of the disconnect in religious Jewish society here in Israel will not disappear nor will it be solved by benign neglect. It is one of the major issues that we must think about and act upon in order to initiate a process that will eventually lessen, if not even eliminate, this disconnection.

VAYIKRA

The word vayikra that begins this week's Torah reading, and is the name of the third book of the Chumash, is distinguished by having a miniature alef at the end of the word. I have written about this exceptional script/font in previous years. I concentrated then mainly on the traditional explanation that this small letter was inserted in the Torah to highlight the abject humility of our teacher Moshe, with this character trait of humility being the basis for his extraordinary relationship with the Creator. The focus of the explanation regarding this miniature letter was placed on Moshe. However, if I may, I would suggest another type of interpretation in which the focus is not on Moshe, the recipient of God's words, but rather is on God Himself, so to speak.

In the famous vision of the prophet Elijah as recorded for us in the book of Kings, the Lord illustrates to the prophet and through him to all of Israel and mankind that God is not to be found in thunder and earthquakes, tornadoes and hurricanes and the other majestic and awe-inspiring vagaries of natural sound. Rather He is to be found in the still small voice that constantly emanates from Heaven.

God calls out to us in that modulated whispered tone of voice. He calls out to us with a small alef, reduced in size and volume. But the loud voice cannot maintain itself for all times, whereas the small voice that Elijah heard still echoes in our ears thousands of years later.

If one wants to hear God's voice, so to speak, speaking to one's self, then one has to strain to hear the whispered utterances, the nuances of tone, the drama of almost silence itself.

The rabbis of the Talmud emphasized this message and cautioned us: "The words of the wise are heard and appreciated when they are said with calm and softness." In our world of constant sound, the cacophony of shouting and disagreements dominate the sound waves of the world. In such an environment it is difficult, if not almost well nigh impossible, to hear the whispered voice of Sinai, which is broadcast daily to the human race.

One of the basic tenets of Judaism is to somehow attempt to imitate the traits, so to speak, of our Creator. Therefore if God speaks to us in a soft and calm voice and manner, then that should be the voice and manner that we should constantly employ when communicating with others. King Solomon in Proverbs taught us that shouting is the weapon of

fools. The greatness of Moshe is emphasized in his ability to hear the Godly voice speaking to him, while others, outside the holy precincts of the Mishkan/Tabernacle were unable to do so.

In an expansive way, one can say that those who cannot hear the still small voice of God, so to speak, are really deaf to the spiritual demands that the Torah places upon us – they are outside the precincts of the holy structure of Judaism. My revered teachers in my student years emphasized to us that high volume while praying does not always equal proper intent and concentration. God hears the silence of our hearts. We should all attempt to hear the softness of His communication, in His relationship to us.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks Why Do We Sacrifice?

The laws of sacrifices that dominate the early chapters of the book of Leviticus, are among the hardest in the Torah to relate to in the present. It has been almost 2,000 years since the Temple was destroyed and the sacrificial system came to an end. But Jewish thinkers, especially the more mystical among them, strove to understand the inner significance of the sacrifices and the statement they made about the relationship between humanity and God. They were thus able to rescue their spirit even if their physical enactment was no longer possible.

Among the simplest yet most profound was the comment made by R. Shneur Zalman of Ladi, the first Rebbe of Lubavitch. He noticed a grammatical oddity about the second line of today's parsha:

Speak to the children of Israel and say to them: when one of you offers a sacrifice to the Lord, the sacrifice must be taken from the cattle, sheep or goats. (Lev. 1:2)

Or so the verse would read if it were constructed according to the normal rules of grammar. However, in Hebrew the word order of the sentence is strange and unexpected. We would expect to read: adam mikem ki yakriv, "when one of you offers a sacrifice". Instead what it says is adam ki yakriv mikem, "when one offers a sacrifice of you". The essence of sacrifice, said R. Shneur Zalman, is that we offer ourselves. We bring to God our faculties, our energies, our thoughts and emotions. The physical form of sacrifice – an animal offered on the altar – is only an external manifestation of an inner act. The real sacrifice is mikem, "of you". We give God something of ourselves.[i]

What exactly is it that we give God when we offer a sacrifice? The Jewish mystics, among them R. Shneur Zalman, spoke about two souls each of us has – the animal soul (nefesh ha-behamit) and the Godly soul. On the one hand we are physical beings. We are part of nature. We have physical needs: food, drink, shelter. We are born, we live, we die. As Ecclesiastes puts it:

Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. Both have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is a mere fleeting breath. (Ecclesiastes 3: 19)

Yet we are not simply animals. We have within us immortal longings. We can think, speak and communicate. We can, by acts of speaking and listening, reach out to others. We are the one life form known to us in the universe that can ask the question "Why?" We can formulate ideas and be moved by high ideals. We are not governed by biological drives alone. Psalm 8 is a hymn of wonder on this theme:

When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,
what is man that you are mindful of him,
the son of man that you care for him?
Yet You made him a little lower than the angels
and crowned him with glory and honor.
You made him ruler over the works of your hands;
you put everything under his feet . . . (Psalm 8: 4-7)

Physically, we are almost nothing; spiritually, we are brushed by the wings of eternity. We have a Godly soul. The nature of sacrifice, understood psychologically, is thus clear. What we offer God is (not just an animal but) the nefesh ha-behamit, the animal soul within us.

How does this work out in detail? A hint is given by the three types of animal mentioned in the verse: behemah (animal), bakar (cattle) and tzon (flock). Each represents a separate animal-like feature of the human personality.

Behemah represents the animal instinct itself. The word refers to domesticated animals. It does not imply the savage instincts of the predator. What it means is something more tame. Animals spend their time searching for food. Their lives are bounded by the struggle to survive. To sacrifice the animal within

us is to be moved by something more than mere survival.

Wittgenstein, when asked what was the task of philosophy, answered "To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle".^[ii] The fly, trapped in the bottle, bangs its head against the glass, trying to find a way out. The one thing it fails to do is to look up. The Godly soul within us is the force that makes us look up, beyond the physical world, beyond mere survival, in search of meaning, purpose, goal.

The word bakar, cattle, in Hebrew reminds us of the word boker, "dawn", literally to "break through", as the first rays of sunlight break through the darkness of night. Cattle, stampeding, break through barriers. Unless constrained by fences, cattle are no respecters of boundaries. To sacrifice the bakar is to learn to recognize and respect boundaries – between holy and profane, pure and impure, permitted and forbidden. Barriers of the mind can sometimes be stronger than walls.

Finally tzon, flocks, represents the herd instinct – the powerful drive to move in a given direction because others are doing likewise.^[iii] The great figures of Judaism – Abraham, Moses, the prophets – were distinguished precisely by their ability to stand apart from the herd; to be different, to challenge the idols of the age, to refuse to capitulate to the intellectual fashions of the moment. That ultimately is the meaning of holiness in Judaism. Kadosh, the holy, is something set apart, different, separate, distinctive. Jews were the only minority in history consistently to refuse to assimilate to the dominant culture or convert to the dominant faith.

The noun korban, "sacrifice", and the verb le-hakriv, "to offer something as a sacrifice" actually mean "that which is brought close" and "the act of bringing close". The key element is not so much giving something up (the usual meaning of sacrifice) but rather bringing something close to God. Le-hakriv is to bring the animal element within us to be transformed through the Divine fire that once burned on the altar, and still burns at the heart of prayer if we truly seek closeness to God.

By one of the ironies of history, this ancient idea has become suddenly contemporary. Darwinism, the decoding of the human genome, and scientific materialism (the idea that the material is all there is) have led to the widespread conclusion that we are animals, nothing more, nothing less. We share 98 per cent of our genes with the primates. We are, as Desmond Morris used to put it, "the naked ape".^[iv] On this view, Homo sapiens exists by mere accident.

We are the result of a random series of genetic mutations and just happened to be more adapted to survival than other species. The nefesh ha-behamit, the animal soul, is all there is.

The refutation of this idea – and it is surely among the most reductive ever to be held by intelligent minds – lies in the very act of sacrifice itself as the mystics understood it. We can redirect our animal instincts. We can rise above mere survival. We are capable of honouring boundaries. We can step outside our environment. As Harvard neuroscientist Steven Pinker put it: “Nature does not dictate what we should accept or how we should live,” adding, “and if my genes don’t like it they can go jump in the lake.”[v] Or as Katharine Hepburn majestically said to Humphrey Bogart in *The African Queen*, “Nature, Mr Allnut, is what we were put on earth to rise above.”

We can transcend the behemah, the bakar and the tzon. No animal is capable of self-transformation, but we are. Poetry, music, love, wonder – the things that have no survival value but which speak to our deepest sense of being – all tell us that we are not mere animals, assemblages of selfish genes. By bringing that which is animal within us close to God, we allow the material to be suffused with the spiritual and we become something else: no longer slaves of nature but servants of the living God.

[i] R. Shneur Zalman of Ladi, *Likkutei Torah*, Brooklyn, N.Y., 1984, Vayikra 2aff.

[ii] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, New York: Macmillan, 1953, 309.

[iii] The classic works on crowd behavior and the herd instinct are Charles Mackay, *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*, 1841; Gustav le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, 1897; Wilfred Trotter, *Instincts of the herd in peace and war*, 1914; and Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, New York, Viking Press, 1962.

[iv] Desmond Morris, *The Naked Ape*. New York: Dell Pub., 1984.

[v] Steven Pinker, *How the Mind Works*, New York, W.W. Norton, 1997, 54

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

“A man when he offers” (1:2)

Adam denotes “one made of the soil” (‘adamah’). Not only the first man, but also every Adam comes from the soil which produced the food of which the body is composed. The first duty of an Adam is Gratitude to his Creator, and this Gratitude he must express most heartfully for the food of which he is composed and which maintains his existence.

The Korban that he offers to his Creator, whether of meat and blood or of flour or of wine, is fundamentally a demonstration of Thanksgiving to Hashem that created the miracle of food, and Who performed the miracle of creating the body from food, and the miracle of maintaining the body by means of food. This is the most obvious of the intentions of the offerings. But there are indeed more intentions which can be discerned, some of which we shall study.

Whatever intentions we may discover yet the basic attitude was that not “a man offers to Hashem” but a man declares that the offering belongs to Hashem the Creator. The bringing of the offering is a declaration that He is the Giver. This intention is the principle that underlies not only Korbanot and tithes, but also all the Mitzvot of the Torah: To declare Gratitude to the Giver – Hakarat Hatob.

Quoted from “A Kingdom of Cohanim” by Rabbi Miller ZT'L

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